



NAVIGATING THE COLLEGE SEARCH FOR STUDENTS WHO LEARN DIFFERENTLY

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LC Alumna '03**

College&CareerPathways2026

Agenda

- **About Me**
- **Definition of Terms**
- **What We Can Learn From the Data**
- **Levels of Support in College**
- **How the Legal Landscape Changes**
- **Finding the Right Fit**
- **All About Disclosing – Why and When**
- **Landmark College – Unique Support and Programming**

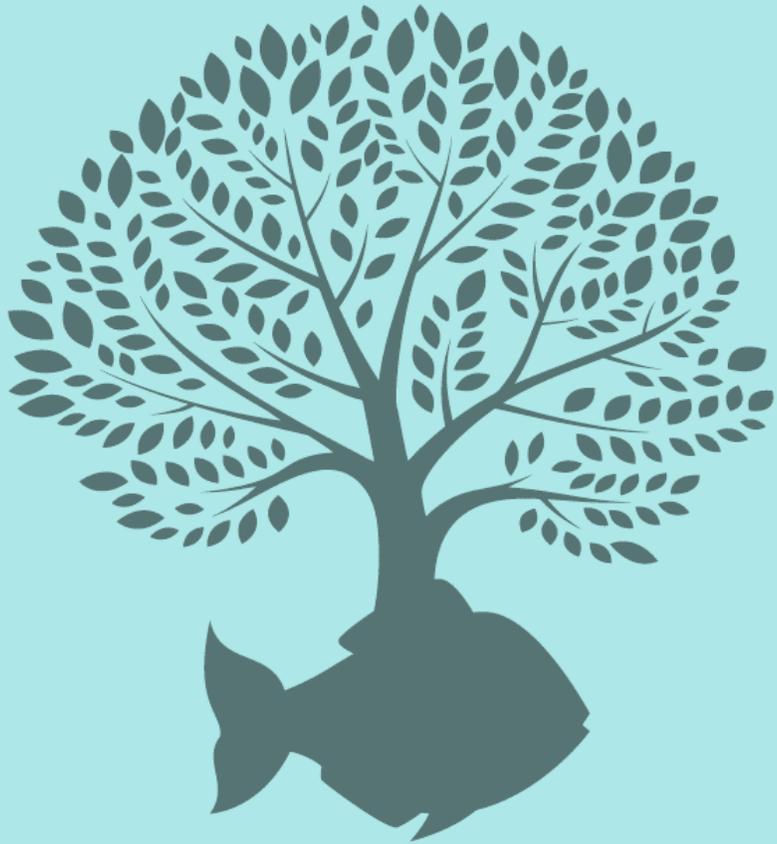
A Little More About Me...



- Home
 - Waterville, Maine
 - Brattleboro, Vermont
- Diagnoses
 - Dyslexia
 - ADHD
 - Anxiety
- School experience
 - Worked hard
 - Varsity athlete
 - Class president
 - Poor SAT scores
- College was always the goal



- Landmark College
 - A.A. Liberal Studies
- Syracuse University
 - B.S. Comm. and Rhetoric
- Simmons College
 - M.S. Comm. Management
- Currently
 - Senior Director of Admissions



**“Everybody is a genius.
But if you judge a fish by its
ability to climb a tree, it will
live its whole life believing
that it is stupid.”**

- Albert Einstein

Key Terms

- **Neurodiversity** is ALL of us.
 - All brains function differently
 - This diversity is natural and beneficial for our species
 - Differences should be accepted and valued, not viewed as a set of pathologies to be cured
- **Neurotypical** - what society considers “typical” brain development and cognitive/intellectual functioning
- **Neurodivergent** - what society considers “atypical” brain development and cognitive/intellectual functioning, e.g., dyslexia, dyscalculia, autism, ADHD, etc.

**Change The Conversation:
Recognize and acknowledge your strengths!**

Providing Context – The Numbers

Did you know?

1 in 5 students (20%) have a learning difference

How many students are disclosing this to their post-secondary institutions?

- 24% of students with a learning disability
- 25% of students with “other health impairments” (the category that includes ADHD)
- 63% of autistic students

The Impact

Post-Secondary Completion Data (young adults out of high school for 6 years)

- In the general population, only 51% completed a post-secondary education
- Among neurodivergent students:
 - 38% of students with learning disabilities
 - 35% of students with autism
 - 34% of students with other health impairments (includes ADHD) completed a post-secondary school
- In one study at a large state university, students who waited until after their first year to request accommodations had 3.5 times the risk of not completing their post-secondary education

**You CAN improve the odds:
Access and Utilize Support!**

Levels of Support in College

ADA Compliant

- Meets ADA compliance for providing access
- Accommodations vary by institution
- No cost
- Small number of staff
- Students MUST advocate for services

Coordinated Services

- Accommodations PLUS some skill building services
- Universally available services
- Smaller student/staff ratio
- No Cost
- Students MUST advocate for services

Structured Programs

- Comprehensive academic, tutoring & skill-building support
- Weekly meeting with a learning specialist
- Full-time specialized staff
- Fee based
- Less student advocacy required

LD Colleges

- Accommodations & beyond access supports embedded
- Comprehensive academic, social pragmatic & executive function support
- Full-time support staff
- No additional fees
- Often used as a springboard

Levels of Support in College

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- Meets ADA compliance for providing access
- Accommodations vary by institution
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- Students MUST advocate for services
- Ex: **University of CA** systems, Most Ivy League schools

Coordinated Services

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- Students MUST advocate for services
- Ex: The Office of Disability Services at **Keene State College**

Structured Programs

- Comprehensive academic, tutoring & skill-building support
- Weekly meeting with a learning specialist
- Full-time specialized staff
- Fee-based
- Less student advocacy required
- Ex: PALS and SAIL Programs at **Curry College**, Thames Academy at **Mitchell College**

LD Colleges

- Accommodations & beyond access supports embedded
- Comprehensive academic, social pragmatic & executive function support
- Full-time support staff
- No additional fees
- Ex: **Landmark College** and **Beacon College** exclusively

The Legal Landscape

How The Legal Landscape Changes

SECONDARY	POST-SECONDARY
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act)• Schools take the lead• Parental involvement is encouraged – parents are often the “advocate”• All teachers and staff are aware of a student’s disability status.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act)• Students take the lead.• Students assume primary responsibility for their education & must self-advocate.• Only instructors a student notifies will be aware of their status.• IEP and 504 plans have no legal weight.

Making the Transition Easier

- ✓ **Transition Planning** – When transition plans specify the accommodations a student will need, students are much more likely to both access and utilize them.
- ✓ A good college match means **understanding** what you **expect**, **need**, and **want** from your college years.
- ✓ **Aligning** these factors with what a college **offers** and **delivers**.
- ✓ Encourage student engagement

ACCESS IMPACTS SUCCESS!

Finding The Right Fit

The Importance of Self Knowledge

- Who am I and what do I want from my college experience?
- What type of learner am I?
- In what environment do I learn best?
- What are my strengths & weaknesses?
- What accommodations and supports will best ensure my chance of success?

The Process

What Do You Need?

- What supports are in your IEP or 504 plan?
- Have you consulted your counselor, teachers, and family for input?
- Develop a list of accommodations and supports you're looking for

What Does a School Offer?

- Work with your advisor to start the list of schools.
- Explore college websites: disability services & universally available services
- *K&W Guide to Colleges for Students With Learning Differences*
- Call/email Admissions or Disability Services
- Determine location of Disability Services
- Talk to students and parents. It's not just about what a college promises. What do they deliver?

The Process cont...

- **WHERE TO SEARCH?**

- Eric Endlich's website – [Directory of Learning Support Programs](#) (also his website in general)
- Using AI is a great tool – especially when comparing
 - Ex. ChatGPT: “What colleges in the US offer learning environments devoted to supporting neurodiverse students?”

Several U.S. colleges and universities offer specialized programs and environments to support neurodiverse students. Notable examples include:

- **Landmark College:** Located in Putney, Vermont, Landmark College is exclusively dedicated to students with learning disabilities, ADHD, and autism spectrum disorders. The college provides tailored curricula and support services to foster academic and social success. [QRKIEZ](#)
- **Beacon College:** Situated in Leesburg, Florida, Beacon College is the first accredited U.S. institution focused on the needs of students with learning differences. It offers associate and bachelor's degrees with comprehensive support and accommodations. [Learnfully](#)
- **University of Connecticut (UConn):** UConn's Beyond Access Program offers fee-based support for students with learning disabilities, autism spectrum disorder, and other types of neurodiversity. [IvyWise+1College Confidential+1](#)
- **Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT):** RIT's Spectrum Support Program provides individualized support for students on the autism spectrum, including academic coaching and social skills development. [College Confidential+1College Autism Spectrum+1](#)
- **Drexel University:** The Drexel Autism Support Program (DASP) offers resources such as peer mentoring and social events to assist students on the autism spectrum.
- **University of Arizona:** The Strategic Alternative Learning Techniques (SALT) Center at the University of Arizona offers comprehensive academic support services for students with learning and attention challenges.
- **Mitchell College:** Located in New London, Connecticut, Mitchell College has been recognized as a national leader for its innovative academic support programs benefiting neurodivergent learners, including students with autism, ADHD, and dyslexia. [Mitchell College+1Skynet Technologies+1](#)
- **University of Denver:** The Learning Effectiveness Program (LEP) at the University of Denver provides individualized support for students with learning disabilities, ADHD, and on the autism spectrum.
- **Marshall University:** The College Program for Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder at Marshall University offers individualized skill-building and therapeutic support.

Always follow up with the “human touch”

Disclosing

Why Don't Students Disclose?

- Fear of stigma
- The desire to create a new identity
- “I don't have a learning difference”
- Unfamiliarity with disability services, what's available, and how to access
- The invisibility of the support and accommodations you're receiving now
- Underestimating the importance of accommodations

Disclosing: When and Why?

WHY DISCLOSE?

- It's the only way to receive accommodations

WHEN?

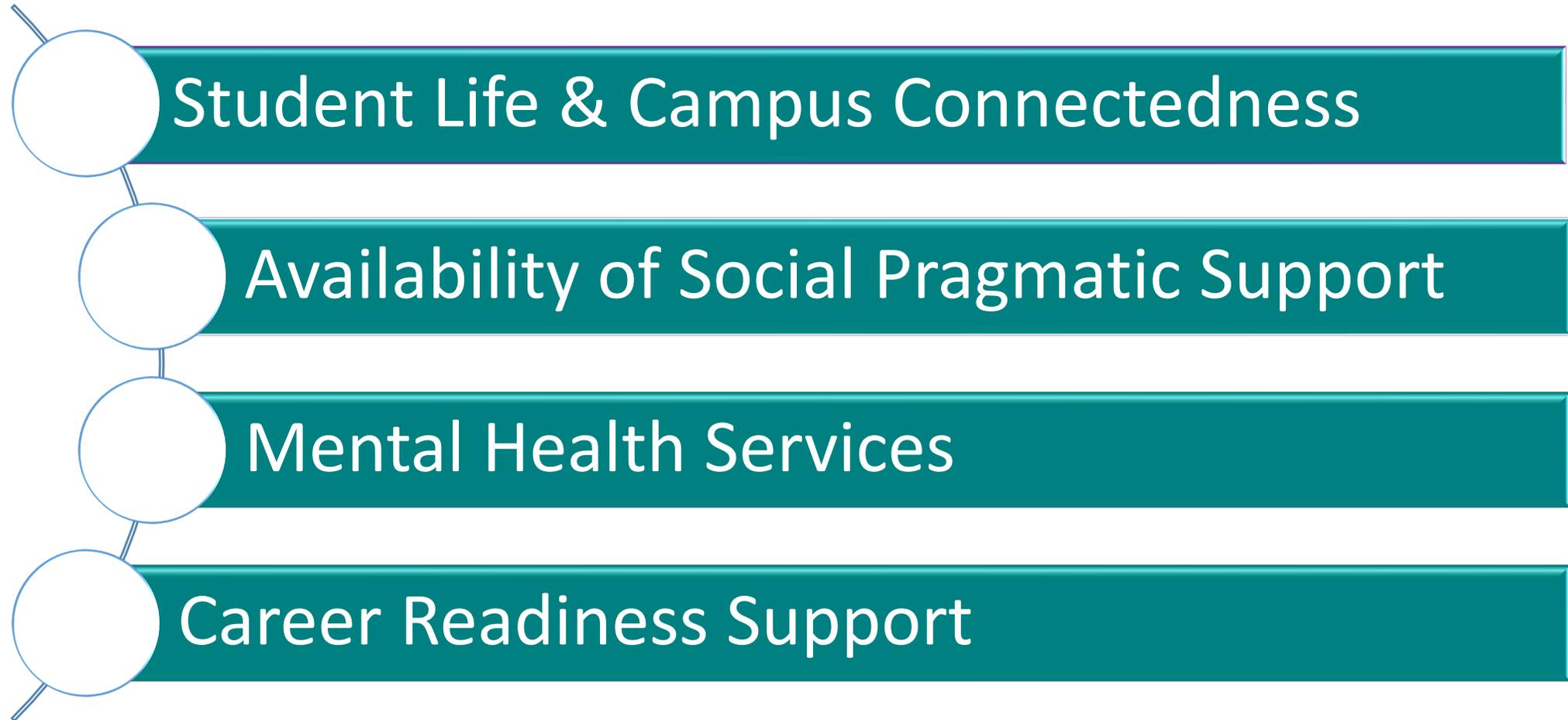
- Accommodations must be in place for the beginning of the semester
- Options
 - During the application process
 - After an admission decision

My Recommendation: Disclose early. It provides the best opportunity to evaluate services, attitudes, and experience how easy or hard it is to access the services that will foster success.

Accommodations: An Ongoing Process

- Every semester, you will need to request accommodations from disability services and inform your instructors
- Schedule regular meetings to discuss the effectiveness of your accommodations
- Be vigilant. Consistently monitor the extent to which your accommodations are providing access to course content.
- **If access is diminished at any point, SELF-ADVOCATE.**

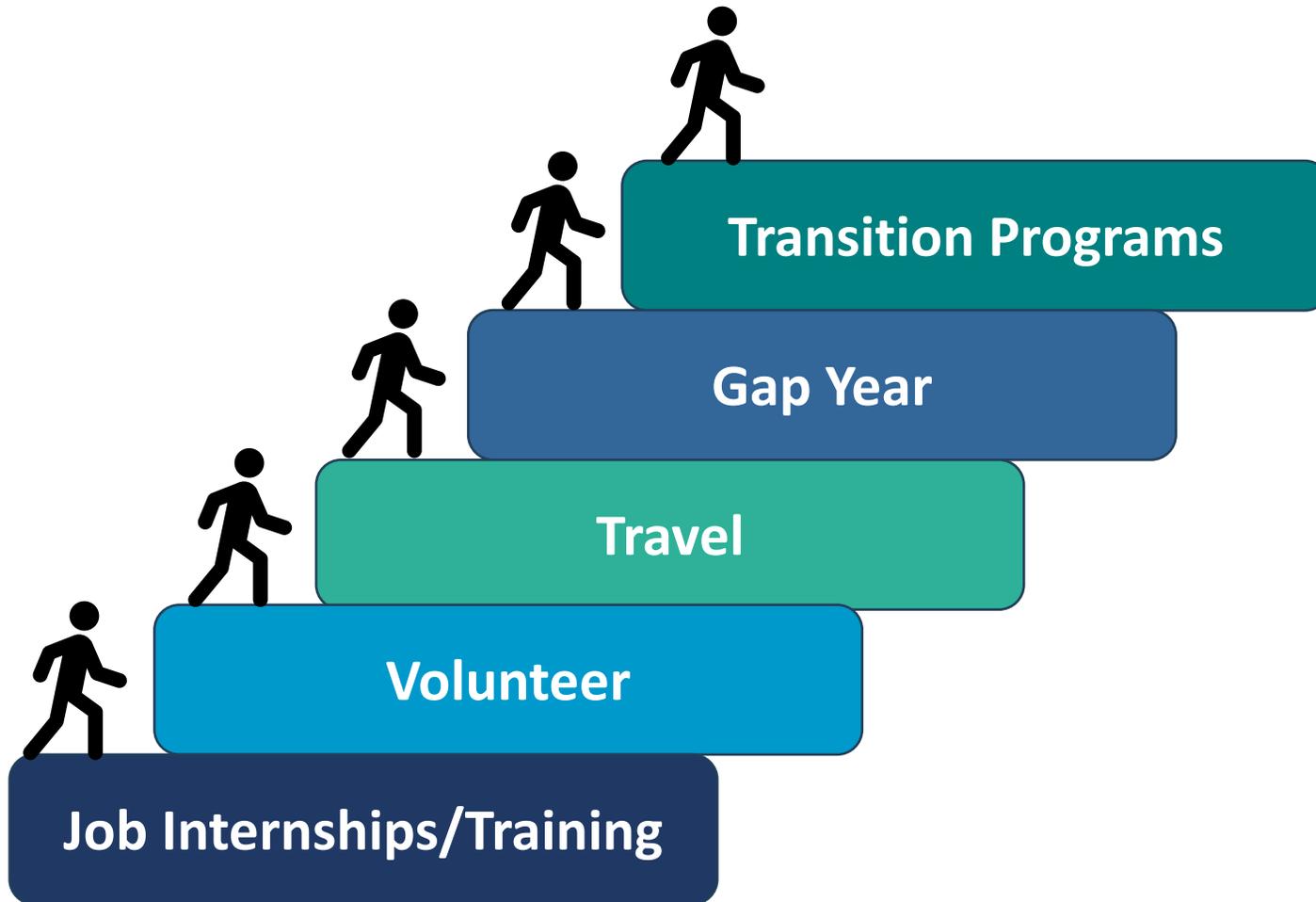
Beyond Academic Support



Ask Lots of Questions

- ✓ Is assistance 1:1 or in a group?
- ✓ Who does the academic advising for students who have LD's?
- ✓ Can students take a reduced course load?
- ✓ Is the college test-optional?
- ✓ What are the college's retention, graduation & placement rates for students with LD's?

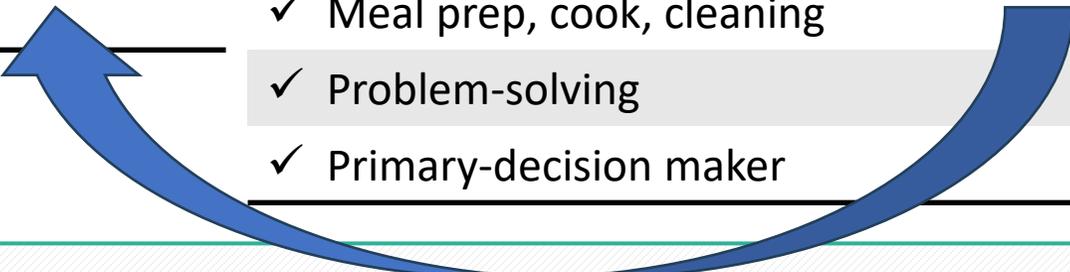
Is College The Right Next Step?



How Can You Determine Readiness?

- How do “we” know the student is ready for college?
 - Having conversations (helpful to schedule those)
 - Struggles vs. Interests
 - Activity

Everything I do every day (Student)	Everything I do for my child every day (Family)	Everything I do for my student every day (school professional)
✓ Laundry	✓ Wake up when alarm fails	✓ Homework support
✓ School work/homework	✓ Medication management	✓ Time management
✓ Free time decisions	✓ Doctor appointments	✓ Prompting/redirection
	✓ Meal prep, cook, cleaning	
	✓ Problem-solving	
	✓ Primary-decision maker	



Landmark College

Devoted exclusively to Students Who Learn Differently



“The barrier to accessing education is not intrinsic to the student but is created by a mismatch between the student and the educational environment.”

Shea, Hecker, Lalor, “From Disability to Diversity” (2019)



Landmark Fast Facts

**Location:
Putney, VT
125 Acres**

**450 Students
Representing 38 States
and 10 Countries**

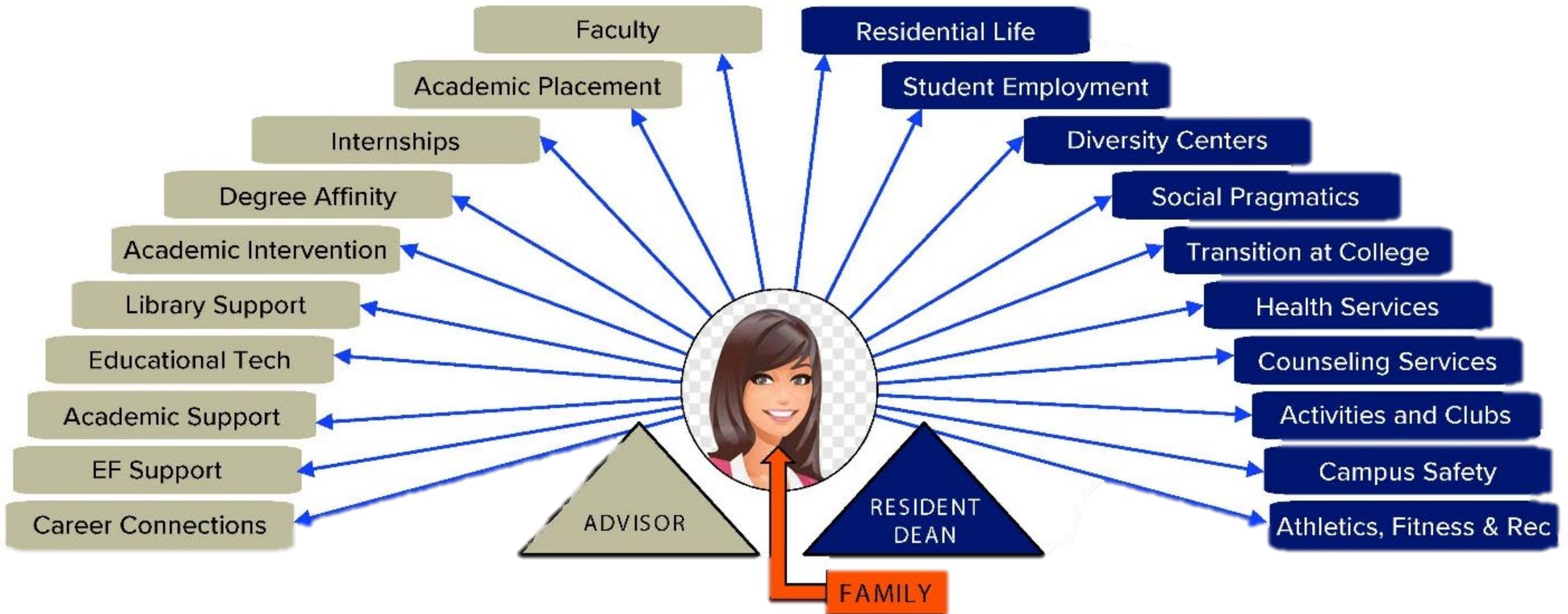
7:1 Student/Faculty Ratio

**14 Associate & Bachelor's
Degree Programs &
Concentrations**

**50% - Number of Students
who Transferred to LC in
Search of a Better
Experience**

**87% of Bachelor's Degree
Recipients are Employed
or in Graduate School**

Landmark Support



Why Landmark?



- ✓ **Multiple Paths:** Online Dual Enrollment, Summer Programs, Bridge Experience, College START & Online Associate Degrees, TaC, Associate & Bachelor's Degrees
- ✓ **Universal Design for Learning**
- ✓ **Perspectives in Learning:** Students Learn how they learn
- ✓ **Community**
- ✓ **Landmark College Institute for Research and Training (LCIRT)**
- ✓ **Center for Neurodiversity**
- ✓ **Activities:** Sports, Speaker Series, Clubs, Social Events, Off-campus Trips
- ✓ **Study Abroad** led by LC Faculty

Questions?



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